

# Shovel-Ready Projects Ready for Light to Turn Green

**Construction Companies Across Country Hiring Workers on U.S. Government's Dime**

**By DAVID MUIR**

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In cities and towns across this country, construction companies are already hiring workers, getting ready for the projects that will get greenlighted for funds from the stimulus package.

The Obama administration has said that the [economic stimulus plan](#) will immediately target construction and repair projects that are "shovel ready," investing directly in the nation's roads, bridges, schools and hospitals.

Obama called the plan "the [largest new investment in national infrastructure](#) since the creation of the federal highway system in the 1950s."

With hundreds of millions in the pipeline from Washington, Brian May, who posts jobs for contractors across Iowa on his Industry People Group, a career Web site for the construction industry, says contractors are hiring.

"One company is looking for 30 to 40 workers this year," May said. "Anyone from flaggers, crane operators, truck drivers, foremen."

In the five weeks that May has posted jobs, they've heard from 60 contractors who are looking to hire.

The U.S. Department of Transportation normally spends \$550 million a year in road projects in Iowa alone. Now, with the influx of government funds from the stimulus package, they are banking on an additional \$380 million.

In Silver Spring, Md., in the past two weeks, a construction company has called back 59 employees that they had laid off. The company is hoping to call back nearly 300 more.

Its first project is repairing a Maryland road that hasn't been resurfaced in 17 years.

"We actually have projects in every county in the state of Maryland that we're planning to fund with stimulus plans," said Neil Pedersen, Maryland highway administrator.

## **Workers Eager to Dive In**

Even in the quiet college town of North Manchester, Ind., 26 people are expected to be hired to build a water treatment plant. Economists say 26 people in a town of 6,400 can have a huge impact.

"It's not just 26 people. It's 26 people that are getting more money," said Stephen Leeb, an economic analyst in New York City. "Those people are spending money at, let's say, the corner store, the corner drugstore -- maybe buying an extra shirt for their kids. And the people that are receiving that money in the stores are also going to spend their money. So you have this kind of ripple effect that can spill all the way through the town."

In [Elkhart, Ind.](#), where the collapse of the RV industry sent the city's unemployment rate soaring from 4.4 to 12.4 percent last year to the highest in the nation, Mayor Dick Moore says projects are already in the works.

Moore told ABC News that \$9 million in road and sidewalk projects are ready for stimulus funding, expected to bring jobs to 200 workers.

[President Obama traveled to the community last month](#), and told a crowd that the bill will bring 3 to 4 million new jobs, "fixing our schools; computerizing medical records to save costs and save lives; repairing our infrastructure; and investing in renewable energy to help us move toward energy independence."

One worker said he'd be willing to take anything.

"I'm not particular about what I'm going to do," one Elkhart resident said.

In Columbus, Ohio, 27 police recruits who were cut days before they were set to join the force will now be able to report to work.

"I'm very happy to get the job back that was taken before I even started," one recruit said.

